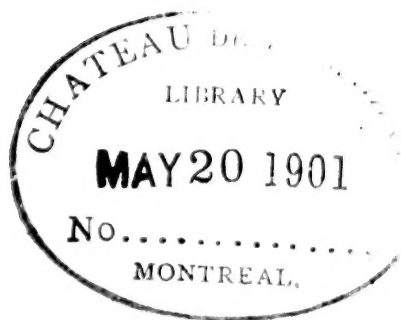




BAPTISM
SIMPLY EXPLAINED.

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BY THE
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'THE LORD'S SUPPER SIMPLY EXPLAINED,' ETC.

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TO THE
PARISHIONERS OF BARHAM,
AMONG WHOM THE AUTHOR WAS PERMITTED TO
MINISTER DURING SEVEN OF THE HAPPIEST
YEARS OF HIS LIFE,

This Book

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,
WITH AN EARNEST PRAYER
THAT GOD WILL NOT ALLOW IT
TO GO FORTH WITHOUT
HIS BLESSING.

PREFACE.

THE Author has long felt the want of a Work on Baptism, sufficiently plain to meet the wants of the unlearned. He has, for this reason, prepared the following little Volume. It has been his endeavour to avoid, as much as possible, entering upon any disputed points. And if he succeeds in conveying a clear and simple view of this Holy Rite, his end will be gained.

This Volume is accompanied by another of the same character and size, on the subject of the Lord's Supper.

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BAPTISM.

CHAPTER I.

THE APPOINTMENT OF BAPTISM.

WE may be quite sure that nothing is commanded in the gospel, which is useless or unmeaning. And yet it is to be feared that many see no meaning in Baptism ; but only look upon it as an outward ceremony, which merely for custom's sake ought to be kept up. This arises from ignorance. Now, my wish is to explain to you what Baptism is ; and then, I think, you will agree

with me that it is a very holy, and also a very comforting, means of grace ; and perhaps you will wonder, that you could ever have thought so lightly of it.

First of all, it is well to inquire WHO APPOINTED IT? It was our Lord Jesus Christ Himself.

Even before His coming however it was sometimes practised by the Jews. For when any of the Gentiles, or heathens, were converted from their idolatry, the Jews used not only to circumcise them, but also to *baptize* them with water. And when John the Baptist* came to ‘prepare the way of the

* He was so called on account of the multitude of followers whom he baptized ; and also because he baptized our Lord.

Lord,' he also baptized those who were converted by his preaching, and desired to become his followers. This was to show them, that as water washes the body from its filth, so the soul has need to be cleansed from its guilt. Look at Matt. iii. 5, 6.

Among those whom John baptized was one Person, far greater, and holier, and better, than any one who had ever before appeared on earth. This was Jesus Himself. For though He had nothing like a sin to be washed away, yet, as He came on earth 'to fulfil all righteousness,' and to set us a perfect example, He commanded John to baptize Him, before He entered upon His glorious work. I refer you to Matt. iii. 13-17.

And then, when Jesus began to ga-

ther around Him a small, but faithful, band of followers, He marked them for His own, and set them apart for His service, by the rite of Baptism. This you will see for yourself, by turning to John, iii. 22-26 ; and iv. 1, 2.

After our Lord's departure into heaven, Baptism became a most important and blessed Sacrament in the Christian Church. For this was the command, which He left with His disciples, 'Go ye, and teach (or make disciples of) all nations, *baptizing* them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' (Matt. xxviii. 19.) And this is the reason why the ministers of Christ ever since, in joyful obedience to the command of their great Master, have baptized those who are brought to them, using the

very words which He desired, 'I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.'

But some persons object to our *manner* of performing the ceremony. They say, we ought not to *sprinkle*, but to *dip*, those whom we baptize. Now, if you look in the Prayer-book, you will see that the Ministers of our Church are directed to *dip* the child in water, *if* the parents certify that their child can well bear it. But as we consider that in this country there would be danger in doing so, and as our Lord gave no command as to the *quantity* of water to be used, we do not hesitate to *sprinkle* instead. Surely, the benefit cannot depend upon the measure of water which is used, but upon the

blessing of the Lord upon His own ordinance.

A false notion something like this seems to have been in St. Peter's mind, when our Lord came to wash his feet : for he immediately cried out, ' Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.' Jesus, however, showed him that this feeling was wrong, as you will see by turning to John, xiii. 8, 9, 10.

I shall now close this chapter by once more reminding you that it is Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who commands Baptism to be administered. We shall speak next of the *Persons* for whom it was intended.

CHAPTER II.

THE PERSONS TO BE BAPTIZED.

HAVING seen that the holy Sacrament of Baptism was given to us by our most gracious Lord, and is, therefore, worthy of our very serious consideration, we now come to the question, WHO ARE THE PERSONS FOR WHOM IT IS INTENDED?

1. Those *Grown-up Persons* who were not baptized when they were young, and who now desire to become

members of the Christian Church. You probably know that, in the Prayer-book, there is a separate service specially for 'such as are of *riper years*.'

In heathen countries, the Ministers of our Church meet of course with many such persons. And as soon as they begin to feel the blessings of the gospel, and show a real and earnest desire to become the followers of Christ, we then receive them into His Church by the ordinance of Baptism. Such was the case in those countries where the Apostles preached; for the religion of Jesus Christ was then quite a new thing among them. This is the reason why almost all those baptisms which are mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles are the baptisms

of *Adults*, or grown-up persons. And this is just what we should have expected.

Again, in our own country, there are sometimes cases of men and women who were not christened in their infancy. Their parents neglected the great privilege of bringing them to Christ in His own appointed way ; and thus they have remained for years separated from His Church. Now, how do we act with such persons ? If they desire this blessing, and seem to be really anxious to serve Christ and show signs of having a truly *penitent* and *believing* heart, then we are ready to receive them. This was the manner of the Apostles : for it is written (Acts, ii. 38), '*Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins, and*

ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost :’ and again (Mark, xvi. 16), ‘He that *believeth, and is baptized*, shall be saved.’

But in a *Christian* country, there is another class who enjoy the privilege of Baptism. And these are the persons who are usually brought into our churches to be baptized. I mean,—

2. *The Children of Christian Parents*.—The blessings of Christ are not only bestowed on Believers themselves, but their Little Ones in some degree become sharers also. It is true there is no *direct* command in Scripture to baptize infants. Our Saviour does not plainly tell us so, in as many words. And, on this account, some have

doubted whether *children* ought in any case to be baptized.

I shall, therefore, give you some of the reasons *why* our Church acts as it does. For although *all* Christians, I believe, excepting the Baptists and the Quakers, have always held to Infant Baptism; and although you may feel satisfied that your own Church would appoint nothing contrary to Scripture, or to the practice of the early Christians, yet it is well for you to have some of the reasons placed before you.

First Reason. Because, in the days of Abraham,* God allowed *Children* to

* The covenant of grace, under which we are now living, is, in fact, the same as that under which Abraham lived, only it is now come to perfection.

be the sharers of His covenant; as you will see by turning to Genesis, xvii. 9-14. We find Moses also speaking of *Children* as belonging to God's covenant; 'Ye stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God, your captains, your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the children of Israel, *your little ones*, your wives, and the stranger that is in thy camp; *that thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God*' (Deuteronomy, xxix. 10-12). As an outward sign of this blessing, God commanded men in those days to *circumcise* their children at eight days old. This was the way by which He chose that they should be admitted, when as yet infants, into His Church. When our Lord came He gave us something

better—even Baptism, for which circumcision seemed to prepare the way. What circumcision did for *the Jews* formerly, Baptism does for *us Christians* now; only it brings with it far more precious blessings. Read Colossians, ii. 11, 12.

If, then, little children were formerly received as members of the *Jewish Church*, how much more shall little children be admitted now into the *Christian Church*!

We can fancy that a *Jewish Mother*, if she loved her child, would feel very happy that she could behold it thus, in its earliest days, taken into covenant with God. But happier still should the *Christian Parent* feel, that she is allowed to claim for her helpless infant a place in the covenant of grace,

and a shelter within the bosom of Christ's holy Church.

Second Reason. Because it was foretold concerning Christ that He would show affection and mercy even to the very *lambs* of His fold; that is, to the youngest and weakest members of His Church. Isaiah says, 'He shall gather the *lambs* with his arm, and carry them in his bosom.' And surely we all remember that beautiful instance of His kindness, and of His willingness to receive little children, mentioned in Mark, x. 13, 14. His disciples, we are told, '*rebuked* those that brought them.' No doubt they meant well in making these objections. Perhaps some such thoughts as these came across them,—What good can

such little children get? If they were old enough to understand His words, then there would be some use in bringing them. If they could have faith, they might well come. But surely it is only a mockery to bring such helpless, senseless babes to Him. And so say people now, who mean well too. But just observe our Lord's answer, — 'Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.' As if He had said, 'Have they not souls to be saved? Then let them draw near. Do they not need a blessing; and am not I ready to give it to them? What! shall they be called on to resist sin; and shall they have no strength to resist it? Suffer them to come. I am their Saviour and their Friend.' And so, we read, He actu-

ally 'took them up in His arms, put His hands upon them, and blessed them.'

Now, when we bring our infants to be christened, we, in fact, bring them to Christ. For we feel that although He is now in heaven, He can still 'receive them into the arms of His mercy,' and give them His own rich blessing.

Third Reason. Because our Lord does not, by any word He ever spoke, shut children out from heaven. No; on the contrary, when He speaks of them, He says, 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven.' If then children may enter God's *heavenly* Kingdom, surely they may be admitted into His Church *on earth*.

Fourth Reason. Because we read in Scripture, that the Apostles baptized *whole households or families*. For instance, we learn from Acts, xvi. 15, that when Lydia's heart was opened by the grace of God, 'she was baptized, *and her household.*' Again, in the same chapter, we read of another case; it was that of the Jailor at Philippi, whom it pleased God to convince of the truth of the gospel, whilst he was watching over Paul and Silas in prison. We are told in the 33rd verse, that 'he (the Jailor) took them, the same hour of the night, and washed their stripes, and was baptized, *he and all his straightway.*' Then, again, St. Paul tells us, in 1 Corinthians, i. 16, that Stephanas *and his household* were baptized.

Now, it is but natural to suppose that there were *some children* in these families.

Fifth Reason. Because we know, that, for *the first thousand years* after our Blessed Lord went up into heaven, it was always the practice to baptize the *Children* of Christian parents. And is it likely that, during those years, the whole Church can have been altogether wrong on such an important point?

Since that time, an objection has been made, as I have already told you, by a certain sect of Christians, who are called Baptists, and also by the Quakers. These last, indeed, hold that Baptism and the Lord's Supper are *neither* of them necessary.

As I have much more to say, I shall make no remark on these five reasons. I think they will speak for themselves.

We believe, then, that *the Children of Christian Parents* are proper subjects for Baptism. And also such *grown-up persons* as have neglected it when young, and who now give satisfactory proof that their hearts are in a *penitent and believing* state. And here we close our chapter.

CHAPTER III.

SOME OF THE BENEFITS OF BAPTISM.

How often have we heard parents say, 'I will take my child to be *named* next Sunday.' And how many a father and mother have asked the clergyman to christen their child, under some such feeling as this; 'We should be sorry that our little one should die *without a name*.' Well, it is true that we give a new name, a Christian name, at Baptism. But it is great ignorance to suppose that this is *all*. There is something more in it than this; some-

thing more to be gained than *just a name*. The fear is, not that our children should die without a name; but lest they should die without being brought to Christ, in the way which He has chosen.

Is it not very sad to think that so many parents desire their children to be christened without knowing why? And yet hundreds can give no better reason than this; 'Such is the custom; and the same was done for *us*, when *we* were young.' But surely, no thoughtful person can suppose that Baptism is nothing more than a custom; a mere empty, useless, unmeaning ceremony. You were told, at the beginning of this book, that it is a *Sacrament*. And we have seen that the Lord Himself appointed it, and charged

His disciples and followers to continue it. O then, must it not, think you, be something of great importance to us, and something very solemn?

WHAT, THEN, ARE THE BENEFITS which Baptism brings with it? There are many; but I shall just mention five.

1. We are *admitted into a state of grace, or favour*. When a little *infant* is baptized, he has no actual sins *of his own* to be forgiven. But then we must bear in mind, that he comes into the world as a fallen creature, and with Adam's guilt upon him. Now, this guilt, or condemnation, is mercifully put away when he is received by Christ in Baptism. By birth he was 'a child of wrath;' but now the Lord

throws open His gracious arms to receive him. He takes him into His favour, and welcomes him as a 'child of grace.' His nature still remains corrupt, and inclined to sin; but God's anger is 'turned away' from him.

Again, suppose that a *grown-up person* comes to Baptism in a right spirit (that is, in a penitent and believing state of mind), then his pardon is sealed in this holy ordinance. And this is what we mean when we say every Sunday, 'I believe in one Baptism, *for the remission of sins.*' When St. Paul repented, and believed in Jesus Christ, it was necessary for him to be baptized: so Ananias said to him, 'Arise, and be baptized, and *wash away thy sins*' (Acts, xxii. 16). And

when the people were ‘pricked in their hearts,’ after hearing St. Peter’s sermon, what did he say to them? ‘Repent, and be baptized, every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the *remission of sins*; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.’ (Acts, ii. 38.)

Thus, baptism and forgiveness of sins seem to go together. In the Scriptures the Lord again and again declares that He is a pardoning God, and that ‘there is forgiveness with Him’—that every true believer in Christ is accepted—that ‘in Him we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of our sins.’ But in this ordinance of baptism He *formally* and *publicly* pronounces His will to forgive us individually; just as an

offended parent, though he is *always* willing to pardon his penitent child, yet calls him up, and in the presence of the other members of his family, *assures him that he is forgiven*. In fact, baptism is the *seal*, or *pledge*, of our pardon. God gives a promise that He will pardon sin for Christ's sake ; and by baptism He puts *His seal* to it.

I will try to make this still more plain to you. We will suppose that some unhappy debtors are confined in prison, without a hope of being able to pay the debt themselves. A very kind and rich friend pays the debt for them. The king sends an order that they may be set free. And, as the matter is of great importance, he not only signs the order, but *puts his seal* to it. They feel very thankful for the offer

of liberty ; and if they are disposed to doubt whether it comes from the king, they say to themselves, ‘Here is the king’s own seal, which is a pledge to assure us that he intended it.’ It is hardly necessary to explain myself. We are the poor hopeless debtors. Sin is our debt. Christ is our kind friend, who is rich in mercy, and who with the price of His own blood, has discharged our debt. The King of heaven sends offers of mercy and forgiveness. And *Baptism is the seal*, by which God pledges Himself to fulfil His promise.

2. *We are made Christians*, or members of Christ’s Church. I do not say that we all become *good* Christians ; for many baptized persons live quite as

wickedly as heathens ; nay, even more wickedly in the sight of God, because they have been entered into His army. and then have deserted Him. But what I mean is, that in baptism Christ marks us as His. We publicly give ourselves to Him ; and we become His property, and are no longer our own.

You know how it is, when a farmer purchases a number of lambs. He has them marked with his own name : and then he places them among the rest of the flock, and every one knows them to be his. Now, it is by baptism that we are received into Christ's fold. This is the mark by which He distinguishes His own from strangers ; and we are then 'signed with the sign of the cross.' Our Catechism tells us that we are made 'members of Christ,'

that is to say, members of His Church, or Body. And we read in the 27th Article,* ‘They that receive baptism rightly are *grafted into the Church.*’

When you see a vine, growing up the side of a house, with its spreading branches, some young and tender, and some full-grown, then think of Christ and His Church. For in the 15th of John, our Lord says, ‘I am the vine; ye are the branches.’ We are grafted into Him (the vine) by baptism. We

* At the end of your Prayer-book you will find the ‘Articles of Religion.’ There are thirty-nine of them; and these contain the chief doctrines of our Church. I heartily wish that these Articles were more carefully read and examined. Then people would see how faithfully our Church follows the teaching of Holy Scripture.

are received into His covenant. But, our Lord Himself tells us, there are many branches in the vine, which are barren and worthless. And therefore whilst the good branches remain for ever joined to the stem, and nourished by it, the bad ones shall one day be removed; for it is written in that same chapter, 'Every branch *in me*, that beareth not fruit, he taketh away.' So, you see, we must not only be grafted into Him, but we must *abide* in Him, living on Him by faith, clinging to Him, as our blessed and hourly support; for again He says, 'If a man *abide* not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered.' And this clearly shows, that a man *may* by this ordinance be grafted into Christ's Church, or be made a Christian, and

yet never be admitted into His blessed Kingdom above; for without holiness 'no man shall see the Lord.' It is only the faithful servant of Christ, who shall dwell where He is. It is only the man, whose heart is renewed by the Holy Spirit, and who is united to his Saviour by a living, active, earnest faith.

3. *We are received into God's family on earth.* We become, as our Catechism states, the 'children of God.' But here, again, let us remark, that, although by this Sacrament we were made *children*, we do not all prove to be good, and faithful, and obedient children.

How was it with the circumcised Jew? We are told in the Bible, that

God reckoned all the Jews as His peculiar family. 'To them belonged the adoption.' Though many of them were wicked and rebellious children, yet they were God's children still. So it is with us Christians. We now belong to God's family. We are permitted not only to look upon Him as our Master, but as our Father. He watches over us with a Father's eye; protects us with a Father's care; guides us with a Father's hand; and gives us a Father's blessing. God will withhold nothing from us, if we are faithful to Him.

And is not this a vast privilege? It is well if we are living up to it. The great question is, Are we now living and acting as God's children? Are we desiring to be taught, and

guided, and led, by His Spirit? Otherwise we are only deceiving ourselves. We are false, and not true, children; as our Lord said to the Jews, 'If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the works of Abraham.' And again, it is written, 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God, *they* are the sons of God.'

4. *Heaven becomes our Land of Promise.* We are made 'inheritors (or heirs) of the kingdom of heaven.' All Christian blessings, as I said before, are placed within our reach, even heaven itself. It is our proper Home, our 'Father's house.' And there Christ has prepared a place for those whom He graciously calls His Brethren. But the actual *enjoyment*, and

possession, of heaven will only be secured to those among us who are walking in the one appointed way, and are earnestly seeking to enter in by the strait gate of faith and holiness.

5. *In Baptism we are said to be regenerated.** This seems, at first sight, to be a strong expression. But what does it mean? It does not mean that each one's *heart* and *nature* is changed by this ordinance: but that our *state* is so altered, that it is like a new birth to us.

By nature, we are born 'the children of wrath:' in baptism, we are made

* Strictly speaking, I should not have called this a distinct blessing, for it includes all the others. But I feel it to be important to speak of it under a separate head.

‘the children of grace.’ By birth the child inherits a curse: by baptism he receives a blessing. Instead of belonging only to Adam, he now belongs to Christ. He is no longer ‘afar off,’ but ‘brought nigh’ to God; and may enjoy all the privileges of His Church. He has *new* blessings, *new* duties, *new* nopes, and *new* prospects, before him. He receives the promise of the Holy Spirit, to strengthen him in his warfare. He has the blessed and ever-bright assurance, that God is his Father and his Friend. And is not this a change indeed? Is not this worthy to be called ‘regeneration?’*

* The word ‘regenerate’ means ‘re-born,’ or ‘born again.’ Some persons object to this word being used in our service for Baptism. This is, I think, owing to its meaning being misunder-

I trust I have now said enough to show you, what a privilege it is to be a baptized member of Christ's Church on earth. But there is a wide difference, in the sight of God, between the greatest privileges, and the inward renewing of the heart unto holiness. Privileges are not salvation. It is not

stood. The word seems to have a twofold meaning. 1st. It signifies the admission into a *new state* and *new privileges*, although the heart and character may remain unaltered. This, probably, is the sense in which the word was originally used. And this, I believe, is the 'regeneration' which takes place at baptism. Clement, who lived about 1650 years ago, speaking of Christ being baptized, calls *on* His being 'regenerated.' Surely we cannot for one moment suppose, that His *heart and character* could ever have needed any *change*.

But, 2ndly, the word is used sometimes in a *fuller and higher* sense, signifying that inward

enough to have been made 'a member of Christ.' But it is further necessary to come to Him by faith, and to close with Him as our righteousness, that so we may be 'rooted and grounded in Him.' Faith is the golden thread, which binds the believer to his Saviour. We must be savingly united to Christ: and this

change of the heart and character, when the soul is renewed by Divine grace, and when the affections, and desires, and feelings, are all given to God. Now, we know from experience, that every baptized person is not *thus* changed.

Our Collect for Christmas Day will serve, perhaps, to throw light upon this *double* meaning. We there pray, 'Grant that we, *being regenerate*,' (that is, already regenerate by baptism), 'and made Thy children by adoption and grace *may daily be renewed*' (that is, may become regenerate in the highest and fullest sense of the word).

can only be, *by believing in Him with the heart.*

You see then that many and great blessings have been made over to us. But how often are they trampled under foot, and made of none effect ! Possibly, dear Reader, *you* may have done this. If so, I trust that God may have stopped you in your course, and brought you to your senses, by His converting grace ! Happy is it for you, if you have been led by His Spirit to feel deep repentance and contrition of heart ; so that you now earnestly exclaim, ‘ I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son ! ’ Happy is it, if you have been brought truly to *feel* your sins, and to *mourn*

over them! And happy for you, if you can now see the preciousness of Christ's atonement, and your great need to be washed from your sins in His blood, and to be daily renewed by His Holy Spirit!

CHAPTER IV.

SERIOUS ADVICE TO PARENTS.

THE following advice is affectionately offered to every Father and Mother of a new-born child.

The situation you are now placed in is a very blessed one. You may look upon the gift of a child, as a token of God's favour to you ; for it is written, 'Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is His reward.' You have now a solemn duty to discharge ; and, blessed be

God, you have many a precious promise to encourage you.

It would be most unnatural if you were not to feel concerned about your child's *bodily* health. Those must indeed be hard-hearted Parents, who do not count it a pleasure, as well as a duty, to do their best for the clothing and feeding of their Little Ones. But is there not a further duty, a duty still more solemn and important? Your Child is born with a body, that must die; but also with A SOUL, THAT WILL LIVE THROUGH ALL ETERNITY! It has A SOUL, THAT WILL EITHER BE SAVED, OR LOST FOR EVER!!

Indeed this is enough to make you very anxious; and how much, under God, will depend upon *you*! From the moment of your child's birth, you

should determine that nothing shall be wanting on your part to bring him up as a servant of God. But remember, you yourself are very weak. Pray then to God, that He may teach and direct you how to perform your duty. Remember too, your little one, like every child of fallen Adam, has a corrupt heart, and is ready to 'go astray as soon as he is born.' Beseech the Lord then to bestow upon him the gift of His almighty grace. And oh! are you not thankful, that there is *a means appointed by the Saviour Himself* by which you may at once place your child in His hands, for this very purpose? That kind heavenly Friend has said, 'Suffer little children to come unto me.' And this is the way for you to bring them—by baptism.

It is now the custom, in many of our churches, to administer the sacrament of baptism, *in the presence of the whole congregation*. And for this parents should feel thankful. For is it not a comfort to you to believe, that other hearts are lifted up to God, beside your own; and that your child has the prayers of many of God's people in its behalf?

And here it may be well to say a word about 'Private Baptism.' In case your child should be seized by illness, and be likely to die, before you can have an opportunity of taking it to God's house, our Church allows it to be *privately baptized*.

Now, some persons call this being '*half-baptized*.' But this is a very

foolish and unmeaning name to give it. We might as well say of those who receive the Lord's Supper privately, that they only *half* receive it. The fact is, when the holy ordinance is thus administered, the child is fully and perfectly baptized. Then afterwards, if its life is spared, it is brought to the church, not to be baptized over again, but to be publicly admitted into the congregation of Christ's flock. Let us then, in future, speak of '*privately* baptizing,' and not '*half*-baptizing,' our children.

The next point I would urge upon you is to be very careful and anxious to choose those persons for Godfathers and Godmothers, who show by their lives that they are true and faithful

servants of Jesus Christ. You should try and find such persons as are most likely, in case you die, to care for your child's *soul*; and who would see that he is trained up *as a Christian*, so that you may have a good hope that he may one day join you in heaven.

Having done this, when the appointed Sunday draws near, ask God to prepare your minds, so that you may go to church with holy and devout feelings. Then take your child to God's minister with full assurance of faith; seeking for, and expecting, a rich and lasting blessing on your beloved infant. 'Be not faithless, but believing.' 'Ask, and it shall be given you.' 'The promise is unto you, and to your children.' But this is not all. When the service is over, and your child bap-

tized, think not that your duty is over too. Do you recollect what was said in the third chapter, about the Farmer's custom, when any fresh lambs were brought, and added to his flock? We said that he would have them marked with his name, and placed within the fold. But would he be content, do you think, to leave them there? Would he not wish to have them watched and looked after? Would not his shepherd provide for them a wholesome pasture, in which there are no poisonous plants to hurt them? Would he not be very careful to keep them away from any dangerous pits and holes, into which they might otherwise fall? And would he not use every caution, to prevent them from going astray? We know that he

would. Then should not *we* take the same care for the souls of our *children*? Christ has said, 'Feed my lambs.' He seems to say, 'They are mine; called by my name; marked with the sign of my cross, in token that they should be my followers. Now then, bring them up *for me*, as if you really believed them to be heirs of my kingdom.'

You may read, in the second chapter of Exodus, of Pharaoh's daughter finding the infant Moses in some bulrushes by the river's side. When she had discovered him she immediately felt pity for him, and sent for a woman to take care of him. This woman afterwards proved to be his own mother. And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, 'Take this child, and *nurse it for me*,

and I will give thee thy wages.' And so Jesus, when your child is brought to Him, seems as it were to give him back to you, to take and rear him in His name. It is your duty, and your comfort, to bring up your child *for Christ*. Your determination should be the same as pious Hannah's, 'As long as he liveth, he shall be *lent unto the Lord*.'

Happy will be your task if it is undertaken with these feelings! Treat your child as one that has been given to God, an heir of His heavenly kingdom. Tell him, as soon as he can understand you, that he was born in sin, but that Christ has redeemed his soul. Tell him that he has been offered to Jesus, to be His servant. Tell him that Heaven is the bright prize held

out to him. Tell him that his Saviour loves him. Teach him that even the smallest sin will make him unhappy, and shut out God from his heart. Show him that the best, and most precious, of all knowledge is to know Christ ; and this the Spirit of God alone can really teach him.

Bear in mind that your *example* is of more consequence even than your words. It is wonderful how the youngest child will watch, and notice, and imitate the conduct of its parent. It is of very little use for a father to tell his boy 'to live soberly, righteously, and godly,' in the world ; and then for the lad, as he grows up, to see his father spending his earnings at the ale-house, using bad words, or doing acts of dishonesty. And it is of little

use for a mother to take pains in sending her child to school, and telling her to behave well, if, when the girl is at home, she sees her mother flying out in bursts of passion, unkind to her neighbours, and rash with her tongue. For, after all, which will have the most weight with these children, the parent's *words*, or the parent's *example*? Oh then, how cautious you should be! One short word, one single act of yours, *may* make an impression, which days and years will not wipe out.

Above all, pray for your child. Never let a day pass without commending him to God. Pray that his heart may be touched, and filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit; and that, as he grows in years, he may grow in likeness to Christ.

CHAPTER V.

A FEW PLAIN HINTS FOR GODFATHERS AND GODMOTHERS.

SCRIPTURE says nothing about Sponsors. I mean by 'Sponsors,' what are commonly called Godfathers and Godmothers. We are not told, whether there was any such office in the days of the Apostles. It is very certain, however, that the Christian Church in early times found it necessary; and it has been kept up ever since. Certainly such was the custom

in the Church fourteen hundred years ago, and perhaps even before that time.

Do you ask, What is the *use* of having Sponsors? I will try to tell you. It is that we may be doubly sure that each child will be taken care of, and brought up as a Christian. As for the *Parents* of the child, we of course consider *them* as already bound, by the ties both of nature and religion, to attend to its spiritual welfare. But the advantage of having God-parents also is that, in case the natural parents should be neglectful, or should die during the infancy of the child, there may be others authorised by the Church to discharge this Christian Duty.

But *what is the particular duty of*

Sponsors? Not to declare that the child will for certain lead a godly life ; for this they cannot know. Not to become answerable for its sins. God forbid ! When you stand for a child, I will tell you what you do. You declare, in the child's name, what it would declare for itself, if it was old enough to make a promise. You become a surety also for its Christian conduct. You pledge yourself to use your influence, that it shall be brought up according to the laws of Christ's Church ; and so live the life of a true Christian.

Let us give an example of this in worldly matters. About seventy or eighty years ago, it so happened that the laws of the French nation were altered. The people were one day

assembled in great numbers, and the King appeared before them, and solemnly took an oath, that he would henceforward rule the country according to this new system of laws. The Queen was there also, and the young Prince. And she held him up to the people, and declared *in his name*, that he too, if he should ever live to be king, would be faithful to this new government. He was too young to speak for himself; so you see she acted in this case *as his Surety*, or *Sponsor*. And what did she mean by this? She could not know the little child's feeling. But she meant, that she would see that he was brought up, and educated, according to the principles which the people required.

Now it is *your* duty to see that

your Godchild is brought up, according to the principles which God requires. It is your duty to give his Parents advice, if needful ; and the child also, when he is old enough to receive it. It is your duty to pray for him. You should feel that he is in some measure under your care, till he is old enough to declare with his own mouth at Confirmation that he will faithfully follow Christ. Then the Bishop will lay his hands upon him, and bless him in God's name ; and he will be received as a *confirmed* and full member of the Church.

Think then how solemn your duty is, when you attend your Godchild at its baptism !

First, you promise that he will renounce, or give up, the service of

the devil, the pomps and vanity of the world into which he is entering, and all the sinful lusts and inclinations of the flesh. See then that *you* have from your heart given up these things, and have devoted yourself to God.

Secondly, you promise that he shall be a Believer in Christ's Gospel. Examine yourself, whether *you* are resting with simple and humble faith on that Saviour, whom the Gospel offers to you.

Thirdly, you promise that he shall keep God's commandments. And here let me beg you to search and try your ways; and see whether you yourself are living in sincere and faithful obedience to the will of your heavenly Father.

It is indeed enough to make one shudder to see those, whom we know to be ungodly persons, coming to the font as godfathers and godmothers. They are bold enough to promise for *others*, what their own consciences tell them they have no desire *themselves* to perform. We tremble too for Parents, who choose such Guardians for their children.

Nothing has been said, it is hoped, to keep back *serious and thoughtful* persons from undertaking this duty. The office is solemn; but the Lord's grace is sufficient to enable you to discharge it faithfully. It is your duty, if you really love the Lord Jesus, not to shrink from it. On the contrary, you should feel glad to

lend a hand, as it were, in building up His spiritual Church. Look upon it rather as 'a work of faith,' and 'a labour of love;' for, as our Prayer-book says, it is 'a charitable work.'

CHAPTER VI.

ADVICE TO THE BAPTIZED, WHEN OLD
ENOUGH TO RECEIVE IT.

It ought to make you very thankful to think that you have long been placed within the shelter of Christ's fold. You have been welcomed into the family and Church of God, by the Holy Sacrament of Baptism. It is your privilege now to look upon God as *your* God; upon Jesus as *your* Saviour; upon the Holy Spirit as *your* Guide and Sanctifier; upon Heaven as the bright and happy Home, where *you* may dwell for ever.

This, I say, should make you feel thankful. But it should make you very thoughtful too. For can it be a light thing to belong to Christ; to engage yourself as His servant; to be publicly enlisted into His army; to be one of His members? All this took place when you were very young. You could then promise nothing for yourself. But your kind Friends, who knew what was best for you, promised for you, that you would become the servant and follower of Jesus Christ. They became bound for you; pledging themselves that nothing should be wanting on their part to lead you into His blessed service.

And now let me solemnly ask you, whether you are keeping these promises, or breaking them?

Two paths are before you.

One path is very easy to find, and it is very easy to continue in it. The Bible says of it, 'Wide is the gate, and broad is the way ; and many there be that go in thereat.' The road is for the most part downhill. Little or no toil is necessary for those who walk in it. There are many gay flowers, and delicious-looking fruits, to entice you by the way. But then some of these only last for a moment ! and others, which taste sweet at first, soon turn into gall. It is true, there are crowds of fellow-travellers to be met with ; and yet, in one sense, you must journey on alone. I mean, you will be without Christ. And every step you take you will be getting farther from Him. But now comes

the great question, Whither will this road lead us? To DESTRUCTION!

The other path is very different. We cannot even find it of ourselves. The Spirit of God must enlighten us to see the way; and He alone can give us a desire to walk in it. It is written concerning this road, 'Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and few there be that find it.' It is uphill at times. There are here and there rugged and steep places, where we need the arm of Some One stronger than ourselves to lean upon. And yet it is a safe road; a way too of pleasantness, and a path full of peace. Every pilgrim is expected to give up his own will, to resist his own inclinations, and to struggle manfully against his enemies; and these enemies

are many, and they try all they can do to turn us from our course.

But there is a Friend always near to help us, to cheer us on, to give us counsel, and to clear the way for us. He can support us when we are weak, and comfort us when we are cast down. He seems to be for ever whispering in our ears, 'This is the way; walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.'

Oh, there is joy and blessedness to be found in this path, which the other *promises*, but never *gives*. And it becomes brighter and brighter as we journey on; for 'the path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.' And whither will it lead us?—To ETERNAL LIFE!

Now, my dear Reader, if your friends who took you to be christened, had pledged themselves that you would follow the first of these paths, would they have acted a kind part towards you? No; certainly not. And therefore they promised in your name, that you would be a traveller on the other road, which leads to heaven.

And is it not truly a happy thing to be a Follower of Christ? Is it not a great honour to belong to Him, and to be a member of His Church and Family? ‘Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God!’

How careful then, and how watchful, you should be, lest you disgrace that holy Name by which you are

called! How anxiously you should look into your own heart, to see whether Christ, and Christ alone, is ruling there! To have received the blessing of Baptism, and yet not to be serving Christ, is to be in a most awful condition. This is making our very Baptism a witness against us. I fear there are many baptized persons who have ‘lifted up their eyes, being in torments.’

Think not, then, that you are truly Christ’s, unless your life and conversation show that you are His; for ‘if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.’

I feel it necessary to give this warning. But I hope that my dear Reader is not merely bearing the *name* of Christ, and wearing His *livery*; but is

also living the *life* of a Christian. Then it is well with you. Go on in your blessed course. You are called to pass through a dangerous world. But fear not. Only keep your eyes steadily fixed on your Lord. He is very near you, though you see Him not. In all your weakness cling to Him ; for He has said, ‘My grace is sufficient for you ; for my strength is made perfect in weakness ;’ ‘I will never leave you.’

When sin entices you (and this it most assuredly will do), think to yourself, ‘I am God’s child ; how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against my heavenly Father ?’ When Satan troubles you, fly to your Saviour for support. And, when the world offers you a bribe, think of that better

world, your own true home, to which you are hastening. Tell those who would lead you astray, that you are *already pledged to Christ*; that you find His yoke easy, and His burden light; that you have been signed with the sign of His cross, in token that you should be faithful to Him. Tell them, that He gives you a comfort and a peace even now, which the world cannot give; and that you are looking forward to your promised rest in heaven, where you hope to be received, being washed from all your guilt in the blood of the Lamb, and clothed with His righteousness.

And now, dear Reader, I take my leave of you. If there has been any truth in these pages, if there has been

anything said to do you good, then think of these things. Most heartily do I commend you to God. May you become a true and faithful member of His Church; so that, having been admitted into His kingdom here, you may hereafter be welcomed to a higher and better inheritance above! And may your ear be one day gladdened by that heavenly voice, which shall say to you, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world!'

CHAPTER VII.

PRAYERS.

1. *For Parents before the Baptism of a Child.*

O ALMIGHTY Father, we thank Thee for Thy great goodness in having given us this dear child. Make us to feel a deep concern for the well-being of *his** soul. Oh, how great is Thy mercy, in sending Thy Son from heaven to die for us! Grant that by His precious blood both we and our children may be cleansed from our sins.

* '*His*' may be changed for 'her,' &c.

Thou hast promised to give Thy Holy Spirit to them that ask Thee ; and Thou hast promised to pour that Spirit upon our offspring. Lord, fulfil Thy promise at this time. May all who are dear to us be dear to Thee. Especially we pray for this our Infant, whom we now desire to bring to Thy holy Baptism. We know that *he* was born in sin ; but we ask Thee, gracious Lord, to bestow Thy pardon on *him*, for Christ's sake. Wash *him* from *his* guilt, and sanctify *him* by Thy Holy Spirit.

O Thou great and Good Shepherd, we bring this Lamb to Thee. Receive *him* into the arms of Thy mercy, and carry *him* in Thy bosom. Sow the seed of eternal life in *his* heart, and make *him* Thine for ever. Guard *him* by

Thy power. Guide *him* by Thy wisdom. Keep *him* by Thy grace Strengthen *him* by Thy help. And as *he* grows in years, make *him* to grow in grace, and in likeness to Thee *his* Saviour; to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory for ever. Amen.

2. *For Parents, after the Baptism
of a Child.*

O MOST holy and gracious God, we come to Thee in the name of Thy dear Son. Hear us for His sake. Both for ourselves, and also for our dear Child, we offer Thee our hearty thanks.

We have solemnly given *him* up to Thee in Baptism ; and Thou hast graciously received *him* into the number of Thy flock. O give us grateful hearts to praise Thee for these Thy mercies. Enable us to feel, that our child is no longer our own, but Thine. Our desire now is, that Thou wilt enable us to bring *him* up for Thee. Lord, give us much wisdom ; and show us how to act concerning *him*. Do Thou mercifully teach us, so that we may teach *him*. May our words and our example be such as to lead *him* in the right path.

O Thou blessed Spirit, dwell within *him*. Open *his* eyes, that *he* may early see the hatefulness of sin. Create in *him* a new heart ; and may that heart be given to Thee. Fill

him with love towards *his* Saviour. Make *him* a blessing and comfort to *his* parents, useful to those around *him*, and faithful to *his* heavenly Master.

O be Thou with *him* in every stage of *his* life. And after Thou hast safely carried *him* over the troublesome waves of this world, receive *him* into everlasting rest, through the merits of Jesus Christ, our blessed and only Saviour. Amen.

3. *For a Sponsor, before Baptism.*

O GOD, Thou delightest in showing mercy to Thy people; and Thou

teachest us to be kind toward our brethren. Make us to feel more and more that 'we are members one of another.' Give me grace now to discharge rightly the solemn office which I have undertaken. When I go presently to Thy house, give me a serious and praying heart. Take away all my coldness and unbelief; and grant me grace heartily to believe Thy promises.

Thou hast taught us, O heavenly Father, to pray for one another. Receive then the prayers which I offer for *him*, whom we are about to present to Thee. Do Thou graciously receive *him*. Wash *him* in the blood of Thy dear Son. Let Thy Holy Spirit rest upon *him*, and dwell within *him*. Make *him* not only a Christian in name,

but a Christian also in *heart* and in *life*. O Lord, direct *his* parents ; and give *him* Thy heavenly blessing, both now and ever, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

4. *For a Sponsor, after Baptism.*

O LORD JESUS CHRIST, Thou didst suffer little children to come unto Thee when Thou wast upon earth ; and Thou hast graciously appointed a way for bringing them to Thee now. I heartily thank Thee, that Thou hast permitted us to approach Thee, in the holy Sacrament of Baptism.

Blessed be Thy name, that this Child hath been received into the

Christian Fold. Grant that, 'being buried with Christ in Baptism,' *he* may live the life of Christ. Make *him* to walk in the path of holiness. Make *him* happy. Give *him* a spiritual mind; and may *he* earnestly set *his* affections on things above.

O heavenly Father, Thou knowest the temptations to which *he* is exposed; shelter *him* under Thy wings, and keep *him* Thine for evermore.

Give me grace to do my duty in this solemn office. May I be faithful to my trust, feeling that Thine eye is upon me. Lord, I know my exceeding weakness. Do Thou help me in my endeavours, and then pardon all my failings. And now hear me, O my God, in these my imperfect prayers; and do for me, and for this

dear child, more than I can ask or think, for the sake of Jesus Christ, our ever-blessed Redeemer. Amen.

5. For a Baptized Person.

O ALMIGHTY FATHER, I thank Thee that I am allowed to draw near to Thee as Thy child, and to call Thee my Father. I was once a poor outcast, a child of wrath, but Thou didst mercifully receive me into Thy family.

I confess, Lord, that I have not lived up to my high calling. Though I am a Christian in name, I have not always been a Christian in conduct. Father, I have sinned. I have dishonoured Thee, and have not been a faithful follower

of my Saviour. My own heart condemns me. Oh, forgive, for Christ's sake, all my weakness, my ignorance, and my sins. And make me more obedient, more watchful, and more holy. Give me more of the mind of Christ. Form me, and shape me, according to His blessed image. May I be Christ's and may Christ be mine. May I live by faith on the Son of God.

Blessed Saviour, I have been marked with Thy cross. Oh, let me never be ashamed of Thee. Enable me to fight the good fight, and be faithful unto death. As I have been buried with Thee in baptism, may I now be truly risen with Thee ; and may I seek those things which are above. Send down Thy Holy Spirit, to be my daily Guide and Teacher.

O my God, never leave me to myself whilst I am here. And at length take me to Thyself, to dwell with Thee for ever. Grant this, I beseech Thee, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen.

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